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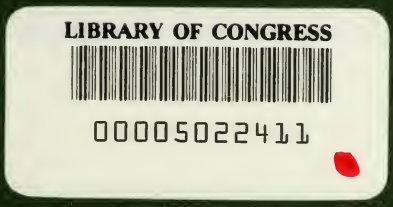

SPEECH

OF

HON. F. P. STANTON, OF TENNESSEE,

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 14, 1848.

On the Message of the President transmitting Documents in relation to the return of Santa Anna and Paredes to Mexico, and refusing to furnish the Instructions given Mr. Slidell, as requested by a Resolution of the House of the 4th of January, 1848.

Mr. STANTON said: Mr. Speaker, if it were my purpose to reply to the argument of the gentleman from Mississippi, who has just taken his seat, the character and extent of the subjects introduced by him would give me an unlimited field for the discussion of every question connected with the Mexican war. But I do not rise now to answer particularly the speech of that gentleman. Nor do I propose to direct my remarks exclusively to the message of the President, now under consideration, in which he states the most satisfactory reasons for refusing information called for by a resolution of this House. My purpose is to give my views generally upon the present condition of affairs as connected with the existing war, and to show the responsibility which justly attaches to the conduct and bearing of the two political parties which control the destinies of this country. In doing this, however, it will come properly within the scope of my remarks incidentally to defend the position assumed by the President, from the severe assaults which have been made upon it by the gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. TOMPKINS,] and others, who have taken part in this debate.

The treaty which is now known to have been submitted to the Senate of the United States, and ratified, with some modifications, by that body, is yet to be submitted to the Mexican Congress for its ratification. We are by no means sure that its action will be favorable. We cannot, therefore, properly consider things in the same light in which we should view them, if the existence of peace were absolutely certain. Consequently, every question which would have been legitimately the subject of consideration before the arrival of the treaty, may still, with great propriety, enter into our present discussions.

The gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. TOMPKINS,] in reviewing the message now on your table, has taken occasion to brand the President with the charge of a gross usurpation of power in the commencement of the existing war. There is nothing novel in this grave imputation. It is only another edition of what we have heard a thousand times asserted on this floor, and as often endeavored to be sustained by every variety of argument which the minds of ingenious gentlemen could invent. To prove this charge against the President, amounting to little less than actual treason, seems, from their arguments, to be the leading motive of gentlemen in endeavoring to force from the President a premature disclosure of the secret correspondence of the State Department with our minister in Mexico. Of the constitutionality of the President's course in refusing the information, there can be no question. There is no clause in the Constitution requiring him to respond to the calls of either House of Congress. It is his duty to consult the Senate in matters of foreign negotiation, and it is obviously proper for him to give to his Senatoria advisers every item of information which wil enable them to act understandingly. There are cases, however, in which he may, and the President often does, withhold many facts from them. When the House of Representatives, which does not occupy the same confidential and advisory relation to the President, calls upon him for information, it is his solemn duty to consider whether the communication can be safely made with due regard to the true interests of the country. In determining this question, he acts upon his own responsibility and at his own peril. But it is in all cases a question of expediency alone. There is no constitutional or legal obligation depriving him of all discretion in a matter oftentimes so grave and important in its bearing upon the public weal. I shall endeavor to show, Mr. Speaker, that, under present circumstances—our country engaged in a foreign war, and parties at home bitterly divided upon all the questions connected with it—there are the strongest possible grounds of expediency, palpable to us who do not know the nature of the correspondence sought to be made public, rendering it a matter of imperious necessity that our secret negotiations should not be exposed to the eye of the world.

The very arguments adduced by the honorable gentlemen who attack the principles of this message, would of themselves convince me of the perfect propriety of the President's course, even if he were not fortified by the authority of Washington, and others who have worthily occupied the seat which was sanctified by "the Father of his Country." It is asserted that the President is the author of this war, and that the information called for is necessary to enable the gentlemen who make the accusation, successfully to brand him as its author, and to throw all its responsibility on his shoulders. This, sir, is the patriotic spirit in which this novel doctrine is urged at the present crisis! I wish to inquire whether this spirit ought to be gratified. And, in order to do this properly, I will advert briefly to the history of this war, especially in its relation to the conduct of those who now complain of the President for refusing the information sought.

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Whatever may have been the circumstances attending the commencement of the war, whatever may have been its true cause, and whoever may be responsible for its origin, there is one fact which cannot be disputed—there is one great proposition which admits of no discussion. It is this: that from the 13th May, 1846, the war became our country's war, solemnly sanctioned by every department of the Government, and by every legal and constitutional form known to the fundamental laws of the land. This law of the 13th May, 1846, declared that the war was commenced "by the act of Mexico." I believe that solemn declaration to have been strictly true. But, true or not true, the acts of the President up to that time, whatever they may have been, were not only justified, but sanctioned, adopted, and made the acts of the American Government. By every high requisite of legislation, and by the constitutional action and concurrence of every department of the Government, the existing war was acknowledged, approved, and assumed, and all the power of the United States was authorized to be exerted in its prosecution. Tell me not, gentlemen on the other side of this Chamber, tell me not of your objections to the preamble of that act; tell me not that you and your party associates of the other House voted for it only to relieve Gen. Taylor from his dangerous position. Let this be so, and still it does not affect my position in the least. Say, if you will, it was all done by the Democrats—that you objected to the preamble, and they forced you to take the bill as it was. Still, it was none the less the country's war. The Government, by a constitutional majority of the representatives of the people and of the States, was none the less fully and absolutely committed. It is in respect to a war thus commenced, and thus assumed by every department of this Government, proceeding by every solemn legal and constitutional mode, that such declarations as we have listened to from the gentleman from Mississippi and others were sent forth to the enemy and to the world.

But you, who voted for the first act recognizing the war, may justify yourselves as you can. So large a force—ten millions of money and fifty thousand men—was scarcely necessary to relieve General Taylor; and the terms of the bill itself indicate but too clearly that such was but an unimportant part of its purpose. But your conduct at the subsequent session of Congress leaves you no escape. No flimsy excuse of a similar kind will save you from your full share of responsibility for the war measures of that session. What was then the condition of things? Our victorious army was then in the heart of the enemy's country, waging a war of invasion with great success. The President's message gave us a very clear and satisfactory statement of the results, which, up to that time, had been accomplished, and of the objects to be accomplished by the further prosecution of the war. With all these statements before your eyes, you assisted in supplying men and money. You charged the President with views of conquest; you denounced his policy in strong terms; yet you voted the supplies. I will read from the President's message to show how fully we were informed of all that had been done, and all that was proposed to be accomplished. The Executive said:

"I congratulate you on the success which has thus attended our military and naval operations. In less than seven months after Mexico commenced hostilities, at a time selected by herself, we have taken possession of many of her principal ports, driven back and pursued her invading army, and acquired military possession of the Mexican provinces of New Mexico, New Leon, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and the Californias, a territory larger in extent than that embraced in the original thirteen States of the Union, inhabited by a considerable population, and much of it more than a thousand miles from the points at which we had to collect our forces and commence our movements. By the blockade, the import and export trade of the enemy has been cut off."

So much as to the result of our operations, and the extent of our conquests up to that time. I will now read some short extracts explanatory of the objects for which he demanded the means of still further prosecuting the war. He said:

"The war has not been waged with a view to conquest; but, having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country, and will be vigorously prosecuted there, with a view to obtain an honorable peace, and thereby secure ample indemnity for the expenses of the war, as well as to our much-injured citizens, who hold large pecuniary demands against Mexico." * * * *

"It may be proper to provide for the security of these important conquests, by making an adequate appropriation for the purpose of erecting fortifications, and defraying the expenses necessarily incident to the maintenance of our possession and authority over them." * * * *

"Among our just causes of complaint against Mexico, arising out of her refusal to treat for peace, as well before as since the war so unjustly commenced on her part, are, the extraordinary expenditures in which we have been involved. Justice to our own people will make it proper that Mexico should be held responsible for these expenditures."

I repeat, sir, that with these facts before their eyes—with a full knowledge of the extent of the conquests already made, and the purposes designed by the Administration, the members of the Opposition on this floor very generally voted for the bills introduced in accordance with the Presidential recommendation. But, sir, these expositions by the President, clear and unequivocal as they were, did not constitute the whole of the information then before that Congress. General Scott had gone to take command of the army in Mexico, and it was well known that an important operation was about to be undertaken—nothing less than the reduction of Vera Cruz and its almost impregnable castle, and thus to open a way to the very capital of Mexico itself. Gentlemen did not hesitate to refer to these palpable demonstrations, and to denounce the policy of the Administration as tending to conquests the most extensive as well as the most unjust. And yet, strange to say, most of those very gentlemen voted for the men and money demanded by the President to carry out the very policy plainly exhibited in the message, and to accomplish the magnificent military projects, the preparations for which were apparent to the whole world. I have before me the vote on one of the leading acts of the last session, known as "the ten-regiment bill." The vote is 35 to 170—less than one-fifth of the whole House voting against it; and many of them, doubtless, because they preferred some other mode of raising the force proposed. Among the majority, I find the name of every Whig from the State of Tennessee. I may, therefore, say, without any inaccuracy, that the great mass of that party in this House endorsed the policy of the President, and assisted him, by their votes at least, in carrying it out. It might be inferred from this, sir, that they had spoken and otherwise acted consistently with their votes at that session. But unfortunately this was not the case. Look over the debates of that session of Congress, and what a picture is presented to the eye of the patriot!

I have nothing to do with the motives of honorable gentlemen who took part in those proceedings. I deal with facts alone—facts which I am certain will not be disputed, because they are recorded in the debates of Congress and in the journals of the country, and have become a part of the authentic history of the period. It is true that many gentlemen on the other side of this Hall were voting men and money; but at the same time they were denouncing the war as wrong and unjust on our part; these denunciations reached the enemy, inspired him with hope, and gave energy and obstinacy to his resistance. There was not a word uttered in this House, and reverberating among these marble columns and through these lofty arches, that was not instantly wafted to the hills and valleys of Mexico, and made to resound through the length and breadth of that hostile land, encouraging the hearts of the people, and nerving their arms for the struggle. I do not intend to charge these gentlemen with treason, actual or constructive. They have the right here to say what they please—to give free and unqualified utterance to their opinions and feelings, whatever they may be. This is the freedom of speech which, like the freedom of the press, is one of the most valuable and cherished privileges of the American people. But, sir, while the use of this privilege is unrestricted, and properly so, it is always exercised under the gravest responsibility for its abuse. When I speak of responsibility, I mean responsibility to the people—to that public sentiment of this country which weighs the actions and the words of public men, and holds their authors to a solemn account for the consequences of what they say and do. The words used by the President—"giving aid and comfort to the enemy"—have been the occasion for loud reproaches and denunciations against that officer. I do not intend to adopt these words, since they seem to be so unpalatable to the taste of those gentlemen who take them to themselves. But, if the House will permit me, I will endeavor to look coolly and calmly back upon the doings and sayings of gentlemen in this House particularly, and show the character of their acts, and the consequences necessarily and legitimately resulting from them. I desire to deal fairly with the subject, and I challenge the scrutiny of gentlemen to facts which I state, and the inferences I draw from them.

I begin, Mr. Speaker, by asserting the fact, as xtraordinary and astounding as it is undeniable, that, from the remote origin of this war down to the present moment, gentlemen on the other side of this House, with few exceptions, have either passed in silence or boldly approved what Mexico has done, and have uniformly denounced in the strongest terms the policy of their own Government. Speech after speech, in one incessant stream, has been poured into the public ear, bitterly condemning a war which I have shown to have been sanctioned and assumed, in every legal form, by every department of the Government. Gentlemen have ranged the whole field of argument—they have sifted all the acts of the Executive—they have criticised all its diplomatic and military correspondence—and they seem to have had eyes only for the fancied errors of their own Government, and none for the real crimes of the enemy.

When the cloud of war first became visible—when it was no larger than a man's hand—the declarations were rife and loudly uttered, that Mexico had been aggrieved in the annexation of Texas; that she had just ground of complaint; in short, that we had committed a hostile act, and necessarily taken the Mexican war upon our own shoulders. Such were the greetings of those gentlemen to the Mexican Government. Did they tend to pacify the enemy? Did they tend to bring about an honorable adjustment of all difficulties between the contending parties? Far from it. Mexico took the word from the lips of our statesmen. She withdrew her minister from Washington; and that functionary, as he departed, flung in our face an insulting threat of war. Have we ever heard any gentleman of the opposite party speak in terms of indignation, or even of weak disapproval, in reference to this important part of the great drama? No, sir! This transaction seems to be overlooked and forgotten; and all the denunciations of the gentlemen are reserved for their own country.

The Executive sought to reopen negotiations with Mexico, and that Government, through Mr. Black, pledged itself to receive our minister. One was accordingly sent, with full power to adjust all questions. How was he received? The correspondence is before the world, and it exhibits the most contemptible quibbling on the part of Mexico that ever disgraced a civilized government. And how have these transactions been treated here by gentlemen in the Opposition? Have they found anything to blame in the conduct of Mexico? Nothing whatever. On the contrary, they have adopted that miserable quibble by which Mexico insisted that we should have sent a commissioner instead of a minister plenipotentiary. They have questioned the integrity and sincerity of their own Executive, when manifestly striving to obtain peace; while they have excused, palliated, and defended the conduct of Mexico, while she was boldly rejecting the only means of amicable adjustment. In quoting the correspondence on this subject, these gentlemen have microscopic eyes for every sentence of a conciliatory character written by the Mexican authorities, while they are utterly blind to their insulting denunciations and bold threats of war. The former are quoted and requoted, and sent to the people in all shapes and forms through their thousand printed speeches, while the latter are absolutely overlooked, omitted, and thus entirely suppressed.

The Mexican Government insists, that instead of a minister plenipotentiary, we ought to have sent a commissioner, with power to treat of the Texas question alone. What do the Opposition here say to this? Do they make the obvious reply, that the minister has power to treat of this as well as all other questions, and that he was ready to listen to propositions of any sort they might choose to present? Not a word of the kind! They side with the Mexican diplomatists. They adopt the Mexican view of the subject. They seem to admit, by their course of argument, that the American Government ought to have yielded to this demand, and excluded the great question of indemnity for Mexican spoliations from the negotiations about to be entered upon. They go further than this. They say, in effect, that our minister ought not to have had the power to treat of indemnity—that Mexican perversity and obstinacy should have been so far humored, that we ought, in advance, to have stipulated and pro-

claimed that our minister was not to be allowed to set up any claim for our long-suffering, plundered citizens. The world knows that these shifts of the Mexican Government were but hollow pretexts and shallow subterfuges. Yet gentlemen here gravely sustain them. The fault, in their judgment, is all on our side. I have not heard one of them allude to these facts as any palliation, as any plausible excuse or reasonable provocation, for the conduct of our own Government. Mexico, in the eyes of these gentlemen, seems to be right in everything, while we are always wrong. The Mexicans object to the character of one of the attachés of the legation. The gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. TOMPKINS] insists that we should submit to her dictation in this particular. The Government of Herrera, no doubt honestly disposed to peace, was trembling in the first breath of the popular hurricane which soon precipitated the war, and it was palpable to all eyes that no administration there could safely engage in negotiations for peace. Yet the Opposition here will neither see nor admit the force of this fact. Determined to throw the whole burden of wrong upon their own country, they openly or tacitly endorse all the equivocations and pretences, all the absurd claims and extravagant demands, of a wicked and infatuated enemy. These are the gentlemen, sir, who now denounce the President for not exposing to their view and that of the world the secret and confidential correspondence of the Government with its own minister, and that, too, while the war is still unended and negotiations incomplete! Is it to be wondered, sir, that under these circumstances, when the information sought might be used for the benefit of the common enemy, the President, in the exercise of a wise and patriotic discretion, refused to make the exposure, even upon the call of this House?

But, sir, I turn to another portion of the history of this war. I look to the fatal and decisive occurrences on the Rio Bravo. And how have these been treated by the Opposition here? We might justly expect to behold a different picture; but unfortunately the colors are unchanged, even by the blood of American citizens who fell at Palo Alto and Resaca. Mexico had repeatedly threatened war, in the proclamations of her Executives, through the mouths of her ministers, in the orders of her generals, in all forms and shapes which the warning could assume, avowing her intention to reconquer Texas. That was the declared object of all her movements. But gentlemen on the other side seemed to have no ears for these loud and repeated declarations. No; the trump of war was ringing through the mountains and valleys of Mexico. But you were deaf to these notes of preparation. Mexican generals were calling their forces to the field; they were marshalling their armies; and finally they begun to march them down upon the devoted people of Texas. You were blind to these movements; you were silent amidst them all. I remember well when an honorable gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. C. J. INGERSOLL,] during the first session of the last Congress, told us that while these things were transpiring before the eyes of the world, he had written a private letter to the President, pointing out these warlike preparations, and advising him, instead of waiting for the invasion, to cross the Rio Bravo, attack the Mexicans on their march, and scatter them before they were ready to strike a blow against Texas.* There was good sense in this advice. But you had no eyes for the military movements of Mexico. You could see nothing but the movement of our own army from Corpus Christi to the Rio Bravo. Not a word, to my knowledge, ever escaped your lips against

* I mean now to take higher ground; and with great deference submit a constitutional position, which requires no more for its establishment than that the territory between the Nueces and the Bravo was at least *disputed* ground; that we *claimed* it; and that the President, in ordering General Taylor to the neighborhood of Matamoros, knew that, if not our indisputable territory, at any rate, our negotiations for many years—ever since the purchase of Louisiana—and our recent legislation, considered it as ours. That fact cannot be denied. Granting, for argument's sake, that Mexico claimed it too, and considered it hers, I contend that it was the President's constitutional right and duty to prevent Mexico from expelling Texas from the territory in dispute. Having examined the subject when General Taylor was first ordered there, I took the liberty of advising Mr. Polk that his right and policy were, not to await Mexican forces on this side of the Bravo, but to order our commander to cross that river, meet, and crush the invaders on their own soil. When they passed the Rubicon, we should have crossed the Bravo. The second clause of the tenth section of the first article of the Constitution of the United States provides, that no State "shall engage in war, unless actually invaded, *or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay.*" That was precisely the predicament of the State of Texas. And her constituted authorities, instead of engaging in war single-handed, called on the President for protection. General Arista, with some two thousand troops, was at Matamoros. General Ampudia, with some two thousand more, was on his way thither, avowedly to join Arista, and together commit hostilities. War was declared at the Mexican capital. I think it cannot be denied that the State of Texas, by the Constitution of the United States, was authorized to "engage in war" with Mexico—a war of self-defence. If so, was not the President, called on by that State for protection against Mexican invasion, authorized, as Texas certainly was, to repel the invader? The two acts of Congress on this subject, of May 2, 1792, and made perpetual by that of February 28, 1795, are explicit, "that whenever the United States shall '*be in imminent danger of invasion* from any foreign nation, 'it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to 'call forth such number of the militia as he may judge neces-'sary to repel such invasion." The distinction is broadly drawn by the Constitution, and these laws which carry it out, between *actual* and imminent *danger* of invasion. The Executive is as much authorized to act in the case of danger as in that of actuality; and the state power to "engage in war" is, in like manner, marked by this distinction. The President's is an extreme power, no doubt, to be most carefully exercised. President Polk is a prudent man, and was alive to the dread responsibility of his situation. It was much easier for me to advise than for him to do what I advised over the Bravo. But I submit, far in advance of the question of boundary with which it has been attempted to bind him, that, in the exercise of a sound and fair discretion, looking to all the circumstances, he would have been justified in ordering General Taylor to cross the boundary, whether acknowledged or disputed, anticipate the threatened attack, carry the war into the enemy's country, and, by prevention, put a stop to it. He thought otherwise, and I do not presume to censure him. Still I believe, that if General Taylor, with his some three thousand troops, had been ordered to attack General Arista, with some two thousand, at Matamoros, and had demolished him before General Ampudia joined with two thousand more, who, in the event of Arista's overthrow, might then have been crushed too, by this anticipation of the *imminent danger*, it would all have vanished, and there would probably have been no more trouble with Mexico. Will it be contended, as I ventured to illustrate my argument to the President, that if Mexico had a naval squadron equal to ours there, and it was seen sailing down to attack ours, colors flying, guns loaded, and all cleared for action, that ours must lie at anchor till assailed, and not, till some hundreds of our people had been slaughtered, return the blow? It cannot be that such an absurdity is law. The military principle, that a commander, having reason to apprehend that he is about to be attacked, is safest by anticipating the assault and becoming the assailant, is true, even in the controversy of debate. It is universal wisdom, and as such, ingrafted on our Constitution and laws.—[*Extract from the speech of Mr. C. J. Ingersoll, in the House of Representatives, delivered 19th January*, 1847.

this open preparation of hostile armies, made with the avowed purpose of entering our country and taking possession of it up to the Sabine. All the thunders of your denunciation are reserved for the defensive military movements of your own Government. Incessant and unmeasured have been your curses upon the head of the Executive, for the peaceful march of our army to the vicinity of Matamoros.

And how has it been, sir, in reference to the disputed territory, as it has been called, between the Nueces and the Bravo? Scarcely a voice has been heard on that side of the House to maintain our right to the territory in question. But Mexican claims have always found among those gentlemen ready and eloquent defenders. The most flagrant and unjust conduct of that Government has been excused with all the zeal and ingenuity of an advocate pleading for his client. Yet Mexico herself has never, to my knowledge, placed the existing controversy between us upon the ground of our invasion of that disputed territory. From the beginning she has insisted upon her title to the whole of Texas, and she has never ceased to urge her claim to that extent. An honorable gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Ashmun] suggested the other day, while a gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. Truman Smith] was addressing the House, that the fifteen or twenty millions stipulated in the recent treaty to be paid to Mexico was partly in consideration of her surrender of Texas. It is true, sir, that she has never abandoned that absurd claim. Gentlemen here have placed in her mouth the argument drawn from the disputed territory; they have given her a position of apparent strength which she did not herself pretend to assume. They have made for her a stronger and better defence than she ever attempted to make for herself, at least until after she had received the suggestion from them.

Every kind of sophistry has been put in requisition to enforce the condemnation of our own country. Witness the argument of an honorable gentleman from Florida, who addressed the House the other day. He referred to the Oregon question, and contrasted the course of the President in that affair with his conduct in this Mexican difficulty. The President, said he, could invade the disputed territory when Mexico was concerned, but dared not do so when England was our antagonist. By this argument, it is clearly implied that the two cases are parallel. But how are they in truth? England was peaceable; Mexico was threatening war. England had not broken off diplomatic relations; Mexico had. The British minister was in this city maintaining friendly and courteous intercourse with our Government; and our minister was quietly residing in London, and peaceably negotiating with the British Cabinet. Mexico had insultingly rejected our diplomatic agents, refused even to listen to any terms of peace, and commenced open preparations for war. And yet gentlemen argue as if the cases were parallel, and as if the conduct of the President ought to have been the same in both. Sir, there might be some palliation for the use of false arguments to sustain the honor of the country; but when such sophistry as this is used, for the purpose of placing our own Government in the wrong, and thus staining its honor, I know not upon what principle gentlemen can hope to excuse themselves before the people whose servants they are.

I appeal to gentlemen on all sides—to all who have witnessed the debates from the beginning, whether such has not been the character of the arguments uniformly presented on that side of the House. Every coloring has been given to the facts which could present the United States before the world as acting a part the most wantonly unjust and oppressive; while, to say the least, the most forbearing silence has been maintained towards the misconduct of Mexico.

Again, sir, it is argued that our Government committed a great outrage in marching the army into the disputed territory. But General Taylor found the enemy's forces there, who had evidently been sent in anticipation of the conflict, and as the advance guard of the Mexican army. Yet gentlemen have never denounced Mexico for invading the disputed territory. They freely acknowledge for her the existence of rights in the disputed territory, which they will not allow to their own country. No voice was heard to condemn this hostile movement on the part of the enemy; but every species of violent reprehension is exhausted to blacken the character of a counteracting measure, on the part of the commander-in-chief of our army.

And what has been the course of argument pursued by these gentlemen in reference to the boundary line? To them, sir, it imports nothing that Santa Anna acknowledged the Rio Bravo to be the boundary by the treaty of San Jacinto, in which important advantages were yielded to Mexico and accepted by her, while she refused to perform her part of the bargain. It is nothing to them that Mexican generals, in their negotiations upon the bloody field, have stipulated to withdraw their forces beyond the Bravo as the boundary of Texas. It is nothing that Mexican leaders, in their proclamations, have solemnly declared that all the inhabitants of Texas, within one league of the Bravo, were to be treated as enemies. It is nothing that Texas has uniformly maintained her jurisdiction on the Lower Bravo, organizing counties, establishing land offices, collection districts, and post-roads, and traversing the territory with a well-appointed regiment of unresisted soldiers. All these important acts are nothing; nor is it of any avail, in their eyes, that Texas, by her act of 1836, declared the Bravo to be her boundary, and was admitted as a sovereign State of this Union with that declaration fully known to us, and anxious to be maintained by her. I quote a passage from the late speech of Mr. Calhoun, as high authority upon this question of boundary, sustaining the fact that Texas has maintained her jurisdiction over this territory. He says:

"From the Passo del Norte to the mouth of the river, a distance of a few hundred miles, a single fact will show what little force will be necessary to its defence. It was a frontier between Texas and Mexico, when the former had but an inconsiderable population—not more than a hundred and fifty thousand at the utmost, at any time—with no standing army, and but very few irregular troops; yet, for several years she maintained this line without any, except slight occasional intrusion from Mexico, and that, too, when Mexico was far more consolidated in her power, and when revolutions were not so frequent, and her money resources were far greater than at present. If, then, Texas alone, under such circumstances, could defend that frontier for so long a period, can any man believe that now, when she is backed by the whole of the United States, now that Mexico is exhausted, defeated, and prostrated—I repeat can any man believe that it would involve as great a sacrifice to us of men and money to defend that frontier as did the last campaign?

Mr. Calhoun is no supporter of the Administration

in this war, yet he cannot dispute the Texan claim to this territory. But why need I quote anything to convince gentlemen who seem determined to see nothing which is calculated to relieve the Administration from blame? They say the resolutions of annexation left the boundary question open, therefore the President had no right to assume the Bravo as the line. In vain we insist that the Executive was bound to know no other line until a new one was established by the treaty-making power of this Government, in conjunction with that of Mexico. Congress had no power to declare what was the line of Texas. No other power on earth could do so but the sovereign State of Texas herself, unless Mexico and the United States should establish it by treaty. But Mexico refused to treat. She disdained to enter into negotiations about a paltry strip of land, when she claimed an empire. What could the President do? Must he adopt the line claimed by Mexico? Then he would have retreated to the Sabine. He had no alternative, when Mexico refused to negotiate, but to assume the line which the sovereign State of Texas claimed when she entered this Confederacy. But all this is of no consequence to the honorable gentlemen on the other side. They can see no shadow of right in Texas to the territory claimed by her, and nothing in the circumstances of the whole case to palliate the conduct of their own Government. It is utterly incomprehensible to me, that gentlemen, with all the facts before them, can find nothing in all the conduct of Mexico to reprehend. Why is it so? Is it that party spirit has obtained complete mastery in the minds of the Opposition? Has it come to this, that gentlemen care not how much they blacken the reputation of their own Government in the eyes of the world, provided they can break down the Administration which conducts it?

We might well suppose, sir, that this was the end of the chapter. But not so. I well remember when, in the last Congress, a distinguished gentleman from Virginia, not now, I am sorry to say, rejoicing in the distinctive appellation of "the lone star" which he then bore, made a labored effort here to prove that Mexico had been guilty of no spoliations on the property of our citizens, or, at most, to a very inconsiderable extent—an extent far less than we were disposed to claim. Yet the fact was known to the world; it had been, to some extent, acknowledged by Mexico herself, and it was never, to my knowledge, disputed, until this gentleman arose in the American Congress to prove that Mexico had done us little harm and deserved no chastisement at our hands. But this is not the last link in that unbroken chain of denunciation of our own Government, which has extended from the beginning of this difficulty down to the present hour, and which I fear will not cease till the Ides of November shall have passed. No occasion has ever been lost to those honorable gentlemen, for the presentation and dissemination of arguments of this kind in derogation of the justice of our cause. But the last and most extraordinary stage of this proceeding—the very acme and crowning point of all its madness—has been reached only during the present session of Congress.

What was the state of things at the opening of this session? Our gallant army, by the bravest deeds on the records of the world, had cut its way to the city of Mexico itself. The enemy was indeed prostrate, but was still hostile and breathing vengeance. Under these circumstances, the President called upon us to appropriate money and authorize the raising of men, in order to carry the war still further and to compel Mexico to accept terms of honorable peace. But what has been the course of the Opposition? Have they adopted the suggestions of the President? No! The same arguments and the same denunciations of our own country and its Government have been continued, for the purpose, no doubt, of operating on the Presidential election. Instead of voting the men and money demanded, they paused to inquire into the origin of the war, and to denounce it as utterly unjust in its commencement, and, in its prosecution, looking to conquest alone. These gentlemen proposed nothing—they did nothing. They made no movement to grant men and money for the further prosecution of the war; nor, on the other hand, did they propose to withdraw the army, or to occupy a defensive line. In short, they seemed disposed to do nothing to end the war, either by striking the enemy or abandoning the contest. Their policy has been to talk, and not to act. All their efforts seem to be directed to one point only—to throw the responsibility of the war on their own country, and to brand its origin with disgrace. And in pursuing this apparent design, what a spectacle has been here presented to the world! An American House of Representatives, after being engaged for nearly two years in a war prosecuted under all constitutional and legal forms of authority, and prosecuted, too, by the aid of many of these gentlemen voting for war measures after many glorious battles had been fought, and after innumerable towns and cities, and one-third of the enemy's territory had been taken,—this House of Representatives, the guardian of the people's welfare and of the sacred honor of the country, solemnly declares, by the vote of a majority, that "the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President!"

Mr. Speaker, the facts to which I have adverted cannot be denied. We may differ as to the consequences of these acts and the inferences to be justly drawn from them, but I apprehend that no one can refuse to acknowledge that such has been the course of the Opposition, from the commencement of this struggle. I will not use the words which have been so often quoted and commented on in this House, and say, that by this course, gentlemen have given "aid and comfort to the enemy." Should I do so, I should expect to be overwhelmed in that flood of denunciation which has been poured upon the author of this phrase. I wish to say nothing offensive to the feelings of gentlemen on this floor. But, sir, no one can complain of me for stating that the speeches and arguments of gentlemen here have been echoed throughout Mexico. They have been greedily caught up by the Mexican newspapers; they have been freely scattered among the armies of the enemy; they have reached the Mexican people everywhere, and have sunk deep into their hearts. And now, without the use of any opprobrious terms, I ask of honorable gentlemen, in all candor and honesty, if these things could, by any possibility, fail to have a serious influence upon the Mexican Government and people?—if they could fail to give them hope and courage, obstinacy and perseverance? I ask if they could fail to deepen their hatred against

us, and to fix their determination in opposition to an advantageous peace?

During the last session of Congress, General Scott had left the United States for Mexico, and it was known to all that his object was the conquest of Vera Cruz. Gentlemen in the Opposition here voted men and money to aid in that enterprise. Now, suppose, while our gallant army and navy lay before Vera Cruz, bombarding that city; while the very heavens were blazing with our shells and rockets, and our balls were falling like a destructive hail-storm upon that devoted city; suppose, by some invisible agency, you could have entered a dwelling—its walls, perhaps, perforated by ball after ball, and the family thrown into the utmost confusion and terror—and laid upon the table these declarations of the American Congress; suppose you could have read to them the words of a distinguished Senator, "meet them with bloody hands and hospitable graves;" suppose at that moment you could have informed them that a majority of this House had solemnly voted that the war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President;" what would have been the effect of this information? The very children would have forgotten their fears, and would have exclaimed, in the inspiration of the moment, "Courage, my countrymen! Let these walls crumble!—let this fair city fall!—let it be consumed!—let it be razed to its very foundations!—let us perish!—but let us never surrender to the northern tyrant, who tramples upon the Constitution of his own country, in order to destroy the liberties of ours!" The fearful shell by their side, with its fuse burnt to the socket, would have been forgotten, and its destructive effect there would have served only to spread wider and deeper the fell purpose of revenge. It is true, you did not furnish the enemy with ammunition to be used on the field of battle; but you did furnish them with arguments to be used in the councils of negotiation. You did indeed vote to supply our army with the sword and the gun; but, at the same time, you have done everything in your power to blunt the edge of our sword, and to take from our victories the moral force they were calculated to exert, leaving only their carnage and devastation, to rankle and fester in the hearts of the enemy.

The gentleman from Mississippi, in his speech this morning, has reiterated the charge of a bargain between the President and Santa Anna. I have never for a moment believed in the truth of the charge, because the President tells us it is not true. But, sir, since gentlemen will have it so, let us admit that such a bargain was made while Santa Anna was in the West Indies. In pursuance of this alleged understanding, Santa Anna is permitted to return to Mexico, and is soon invested with supreme power. Mr. Polk calls upon Santa Anna to fulfill his engagement and make the advantageous treaty he had promised. How do you suppose the Mexican General would have replied? "What!" he would have exclaimed, "Do you have the audacity to urge the fulfillment of the bargain I made in Havana? Why, sir, I was grossly deceived. When I made that bargain, I thought your war was just. Your Congress voted almost unanimously that Mexico had begun it, and I saw little at that time to contradict this assertion. But now, sir, your legislators—men in high places—tell me that you, yourself, are the author of this war. Your Senators tell me to meet you 'with bloody hands and hospitable graves;' and even the House of Representatives, when it meets again, will vote that you have 'unnecessarily and unconstitutionally' made this war. And do you expect me to keep faith with such a traitor? Never! away! I have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard, and you shall never have peace while a drop of blood flows in my veins!" Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there would be but two much force in this supposed reply of the Mexican President—a force drawn legitimately from the admissions, assertions, and arguments of American statesmen in this House and the Senate.

It is after all this, that gentlemen denounce the President for not giving them still further means to carry on their notable game of opposition—for not opening to their eyes the archives of the State Department and exposing to the view of the world the correspondence of our Government with its minister, when in the capital of the enemy! Sir, these gentlemen are not content with charging corruption and tyranny upon their government, but they are desirous of ruthlessly cutting into the very vitals of the country in order to see whether they cannot discover the corruption and disease, regardless of the danger of the wound.

Mr. Speaker, I have now but little more to say. I have only to notice that mode of argument which, from the plainest indications here, is to be the sequel, and the fit sequel too, to all that I have now attempted to describe. Some of these honorable gentlemen will assert here, and before the people, that the President, in the late treaty, has not accomplished his boasted object—has not obtained either indemnity for the past or security for the future; in short, that the treaty is by no means advantageous to the country, except as the means of escaping from a very odious war. But, sir, there will be a thousand voices raised to maintain the truth—a thousand tongues and pens employed to expose and denounce the false. The facts which I have this day stated shall be heard throughout the country, to the utmost borders of the land. These will show the people where rests the responsibility for any failure in this adjustment to secure the honor and just interests of our Government. For everything wrong in this treaty, gentlemen of the Opposition will be held largely responsible; for anything right or good in it, they will be entitled to no credit whatever; because their speeches and conduct have tended as far as possible to prevent it. What could the President do? Impelled by one force and restrained by another, what could he do but follow the law of the composition and resolution of forces, and go between the two? He had asked for the prompt supply of men and money to enable him the more effectually to subdue the enemy and force him into the terms demanded. Three months had passed, and nothing important had been done—nothing but the fulmination of incessant denunciation against the Executive. Humbled and broken as Mexico has been, does any man believe that the transactions in this Hall have had no influence upon the terms of this treaty? Do gentlemen suppose they will not operate upon the Mexican Congress in their action, when it shall be presented to them for ratification? We cannot doubt it—they have, to some extent, controlled the conditions of peace. Had the suggestions of the President at the commencement of

the session been complied with—had the information gone forth throughout Mexico, that the American Congress had promptly voted men and money, and that we were hastening on reinforcements to push the war yet further, who can doubt that we might have dictated our own terms? But far different from this have been the reports emanating from this Capitol, and far different has been their influence upon the terms of this treaty.

I was in favor of the ratification of the treaty, Mr. Speaker; not because it was such as might have been procured if Congress had done what I believed to be its duty, but because, against the determined opposition of a powerful party at home, I believed it to be the best there was any prospect of obtaining. The responsibility for any failure, the credit due for anything accomplished—these must be determined by the award of the sovereign people. To them I am perfectly willing to submit the whole question.

At the same time, sir, I am not insensible to the importance of the vast acquisitions we shall have made if this treaty shall be finally consummated. For a comparatively paltry consideration we obtain a magnificent territory—an empire in itself—as great in extent as the original thirteen States of this Union, when they first arose and broke the bonds of the mightiest Power on this globe. We obtain more than six hundred thousand square miles—more than four hundred millions of acres—the sovereignty over which would of itself be to us invaluable, even if there should not be one acre of public land. We get the means of an easy and practicable communication to the Pacific, with some of the most magnificent harbors in the world. This is not the occasion, sir, to speak of the advantages of the war which has been forced upon us by the enemy, or of the terms of peace which we have been compelled to accept by the Opposition at home. I am satisfied with every part of this great chapter in the history of our country, except that part of it which I have now attempted to depict. Under all the circumstances, with all disadvantages to encounter, I am firmly convinced that posterity will look back upon it as reflecting glory upon the present Administration, and as constituting one of the brightest periods in the life of our beloved country.

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